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SUBJECT: INDIA QUICK TO COMMEND AFGHAN ELECTIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 6797

1. (SBU) The MEA released a supportive statement on September 19 welcoming the Parliamentary and provincial elections in Afghanistan, calling the polls "an important stage in Afghanistan's journey towards a peaceful, stable and prosperous society," and a demonstration of the population's choice of "a non-violent and democratic way of life." The statement reiterated New Delhi's support for Afghan democracy and reconstruction, highlighting India's work to strengthen democratic institutions in Afghanistan. The quick approval contrasts with New Delhi's reaction to last year's presidential elections, when it took several days to issue a similar statement commending Afghan voters.

Comment

2. (SBU) The GOI is increasingly comfortable in its role as a donor of growing influence in Afghanistan, and much more willing to take on a public role as a democracy promoter, as shown by the PM's speech at the September 14 launch of the UN Democracy Fund. New Delhi sees building democracy and stronger relationships in Afghanistan as a very high priority for its foreign policy. India has offered to train the newly elected Afghan MPs in Parliamentary procedures, which will be, along with the Indian-built Parliament house, New Delhi's most visible pro-democracy effort in Afghanistan. Building on the PM's positive August visit to Kabul, the launch of the UN Democracy Fund and the US-India Democracy Initiative, and the successful Afghan elections, we have an opportunity to partner with the GOI to strengthen the new Afghan democracy in a visible way. Jointly establishing and sponsoring an institute for democracy located in Kabul, for instance, would be a good way to translate our Democracy Initiative words into action.

3. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:
(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)
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